



WORKSHOP

“ Current approaches and new directions in lithic analysis: defining, identifying and interpreting variability”

Workshop date and venue:

From Thursday 29 September, 2.30pm until Saturday 1 October, 1pm
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Seminar Room

Workshop Organiser: Alice Leplongeon, amgl2@cam.ac.uk, +447778200641

This workshop is organised in the frame of the European Union Programme Horizon 2020, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Project PleisTechnoVar (grant no 655459) and has received funding from the D M McDonald Grant and Award Fund.

Main aims:

The main objective of this workshop is to review and discuss the ways researchers from different background approach lithic assemblages, particularly regarding issues related to the interpretation of variability in lithic assemblages in the Late Pleistocene and Holocene.

In recent years, much attention has been given to major questions such as cultural and technical transitions (for example the transition from the Middle to the Late Stone Age in Africa), as well as how the archaeological record may help us tracing dispersals, including the main dispersal of modern humans Out of Africa and into Eurasia during the Late Pleistocene. For these periods, lithics are the most common and numerous artefacts. Contrary to other types of material (bones, shells, organic materials, etc.), lithics are always preserved. Researchers apply different approaches to the analysis of lithic assemblages in order to best highlight differences and most importantly similarities, which could indicate contact between human populations, either in time (vertical cultural transmission) or in space (horizontal cultural transmission).

Traditionally, researchers from what may be called the “French School of Prehistory” tend to apply a typo-technological approach based on the chaîne opératoire concept, while researchers from the “Anglo-American School of Prehistory” prefer a quantitative approach based on attribute analyses. However, an increasing number of researchers develop methods combining these two approaches, or propose innovative methods relying on for example 3D scanning of artefacts. While these diverse approaches to lithic assemblages are evidence of the scientific wealth of the discipline, this may also contribute to fractures between the different “schools” and impede communication between researchers as well as comparisons between published lithic assemblages.

One main objective of this workshop is thus to gather researchers from diverse horizons in order to discuss the differences between all these approaches, as well as exchange ideas on the different methods. For a given research question, which approach(es) appear(s) most appropriate?

Beyond or in addition to the theoretical background to each method, questions arise particularly as to how best quantify variability. The scale of the study (a single site or a continental-scale comparative study) will influence the choice of the criteria to take into account in the analyses (which may rely on increasingly sophisticated lithic experiments) as well as the choice of the relevant statistical tests to be applied to the data. The second objective of this workshop is therefore to discuss practical and specific questions related to data collection (sampling methods, types of measurements, etc.) on the material as well as related to data treatment (types of analyses).

Rather than constraining the research questions to a specific geographic area or narrow chronological period, the workshop will focus on answering questions related to describing, quantifying, comparing and interpreting lithic variability. To facilitate the discussions, a broad chronological frame corresponding to the Late Pleistocene/ Holocene is proposed.

Current approaches and new directions in lithic analyses workshop will take place during two days. It will be divided in four panels corresponding to different research questions focused on a better understanding of lithic variability in the Late Pleistocene. The three first panels will concern variability at different scales (within a single lithic assemblage; between lithic assemblages on a local/regional scale; between lithic assemblages on a wider/continental scale). Within each of these panels, participants will be asked to briefly present their research with a special focus on methods applied and/or specific points they want to discuss. These short presentations will serve as a basis for discussions, for which ample time will be given. At the end of the second day, the fourth panel will take the form of a final discussion.

Workshop participants

| Participant's name | Institution | Presentation |
|----------------------|---|--------------|
| Arzarello Marta | Universita degli Studi di Ferrara | Y |
| Blinkhorn James | University of Cambridge | Y |
| Bonilauri Stéphanie | Museum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris - UMR CNRS 7194 | Y |
| Borgia Valentina | University of Cambridge | N |
| Bosch Marjolein | University of Cambridge | N |
| Bretzke Knut | University of Tübingen | Y |
| Chacon Gema | Istitut Catala de Paleoecologia Humana i Evolucio Social (IPHES), Tarragona | Y |
| Goder-Goldberger Mae | Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva | Y |
| Grosman Leore | Hebrew University of Jerusalem | Y |
| Groucutt Huw | University of Oxford | Y |
| Hallinan Emily | University of Cambridge | N |
| Hovers Erella | Hebrew University of Jerusalem | Y |
| Leplogeon Alice | University of Cambridge | Y |
| McPherron Shannon | Max Planck Institute, Leipzig | Y |
| Moncel Marie-Hélène | Museum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris - UMR CNRS 7194 | Y |
| Mutri Giuseppina | University of Cambridge | Y |
| Muwonge Herman | University of Cambridge | N |
| Nigst Philip | University of Cambridge | N |
| Noens Günther | Independent Researcher | N |
| Nymark Andreas | Birkbeck, University of London | N |
| Prévost Marion | Hebrew University of Jerusalem | N |
| Reckin Rachel | University of Cambridge | N |
| Scerri Eleanor | University of Oxford | Y |
| Shipton Ceri | University of Cambridge | Y |
| Tostevin Gilbert | University of Minnesota | Y |
| Van Baelen Ann | University of Cambridge | N |
| Will Manuel | University of Tübingen | N |
| Xhaufclair Hermine | University of Cambridge | Y |

